

Unit 8 – Strong man and beautiful women? Case studies of gender problematics in Ancient Egypt

HPAH7011: Culture, Theory and Methodology
for the Study of the Ancient World

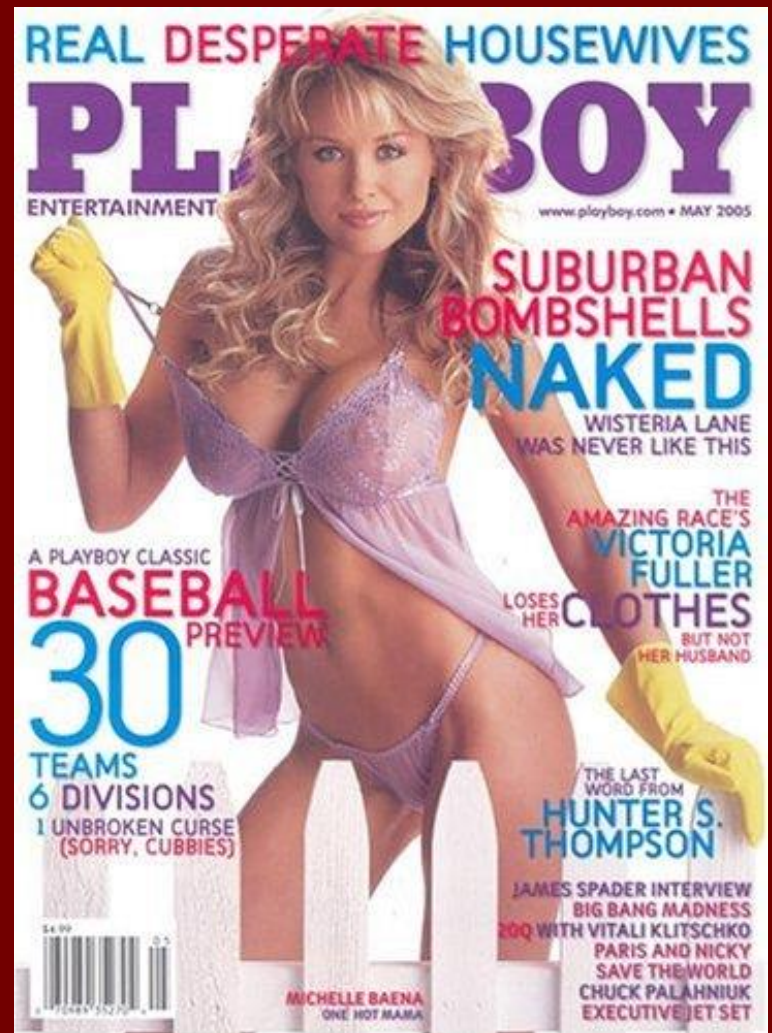
Dr. Katharina Zinn

Senior Lecturer for Egyptian Archaeology and
Heritage

Gender Symbolic



Gender (Re-)Presentations





**The manly
man?**

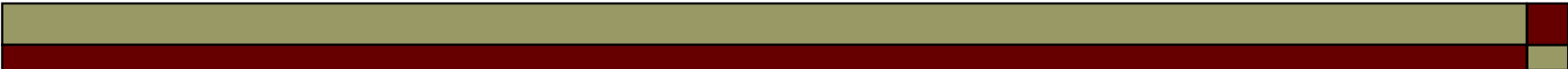
Change of
representations
according
political,
religious and
cultural
necessity





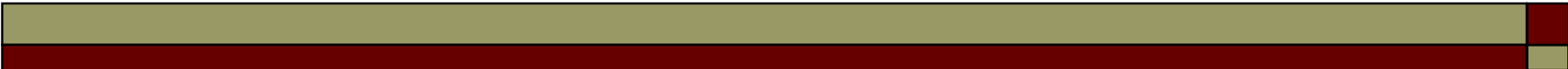
Definitions

- ❑ Sex: two main categories – male, female
- ❑ Gender
 - Gender identity: personal sense of one's own gender – can correlate with assigned sex at birth or can differ from it
 - Culturally determined sets of gender categories existent – CAN serve as basis to form a person's social identity in relation to other members of society
 - most societies: still basic division between gender attributes assigned to males and females (gender binary)
 - ❑ includes expectations of masculinity and femininity in all aspects of sex and gender: biological sex, gender identity, and gender expression
 - ❑ Not always identification with some/all aspects of gender assigned to their biological sex – transgender, non-binary or genderqueer
 - ❑ some societies have third gender categories



Definitions

- That means (understanding of) gender is dependent on
 - culture
 - role
 - stereotype
 - equality
 - ideal



And in Ancient Egypt?

- Sex and gender can be expressed in art and texts (our evidence)
 - Are femininity and masculinity expressed?
 - Why is it important to erase our own preconceptions of human representation?
 - It is said that sexuality is stressed in Egyptian art but what does it mean?
 - What is the purpose of nakedness in Egyptian art?

Gender in Ancient Egypt

- ❑ Ancient Egyptian society was highly gendered
- ❑ → participation in most aspects of ancient Egyptian life depended on whether one was male or female
- ❑ positions, jobs, almost all types of labour were divided by sex (could change over the course of history – weavers)
- ❑ from the king down to the lowest rank of official, power structure + government administration = entirely male

To continue

- ❑ I will pick some aspects
- ❑ Focus here on women
- ❑ Please, be aware that gender problematic DOES NOT equal discussing women
- ❑ Maskulinity, queer theory, ... more difficult to discuss without previous knowledge of Egyptian history, ideas, ...



Characteristics of images of women in general

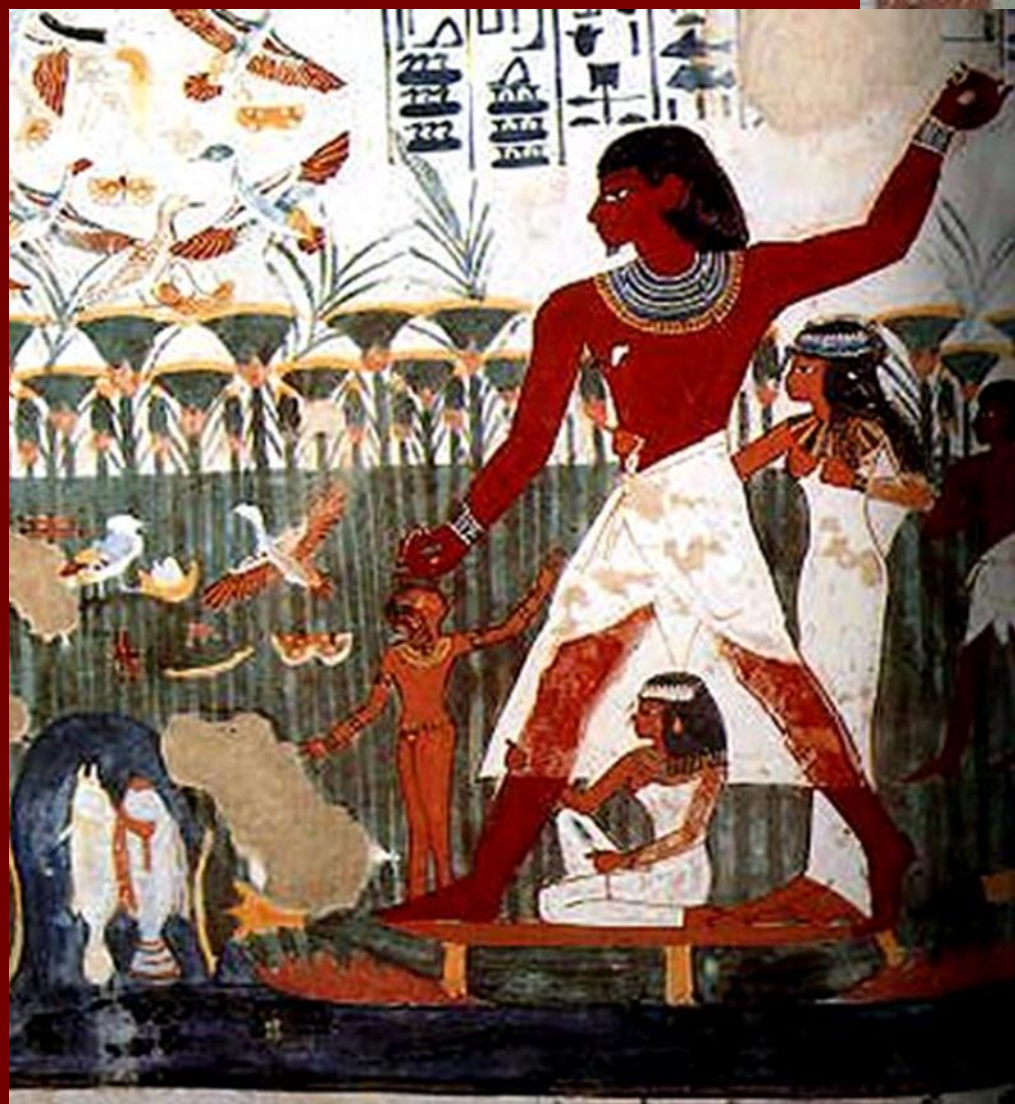
- ❑ Egyptian **formal art is symbolic, not meant to represent reality** → an ideal, structured and categorised world
- ❑ not shown with rolls of fat (which indicate bureaucracy, high male status)
- ❑ generally lighter in colour (yellowish, if upper class) and shape → men ochre brownish
- ❑ physical strength not emphasised
- ❑ costume clingy emphasising so-called “erogenous” zones (though also non-erogenous)





Aspects of representations - sexuality

- Gestures may or may not be sexual:
 - kiss
 - holding hands
 - touching a familiar person
- VERY subtle representation of attraction / sexuality in official art

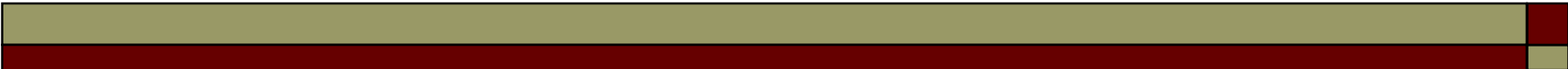






Aspects of representations - sexuality

- Gestures may or may not be sexual:
 - kiss
 - holding hands
 - touching a familiar person
- VERY subtle representation of attraction / sexuality in official art
- Different in votive offerings for temples which promote fertility



Marriage

- Social organisation of Egyptian society through family groups
- Groups centred around: man, woman, children
 - Proven by register from Deir el-Medinah (NK – lists all occupants by house)
 - Lists owner in filiation to his parents (husbands sometimes called hi)
 - His wife (hemet from OK, NK nebet per) + her filiation (parents)
 - What is a hebsut? (Hekanakhte papers) – concubine?
 - Names of children (+ filiation)



Instruction of Any

*Take a wife while you're young,
That she make a son for you;
She should bear for you while you're youthful,
It is proper to make people.' ...*

What is marriage in AE?

- Problematic!
- No legal ceremony, no formalisation!
 - But sometimes marriage contracts (especially Late Period and following)
- Maybe active after cohabitation? (entry of woman in house of man) – *grg per* “to establish a household” (“to live together”)
 - → Therefore divorce = “expulsion” / “departure”
- Other term “take somebody as wife”, never take as husband found
- Sometimes third party = asked to sanction

BM EA 10593 (Ptolemaic Period, 172 BC, Assiut): Marriage contract between the priest Pagosh and Teteimhotep



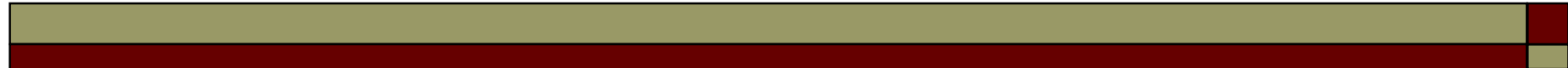


marriage contracts

- Reasons for divorce:
 - adultery on either side

Adultery

- ❑ Men could have affairs
- ❑ Women not
- ❑ → evidence from DeM: “...(a) wife is a wife. She should not make love. She should not have sexual intercourse.”
- ❑ Marriage as social recognition of couples to produce children → filiations important



marriage contracts

- Reasons for divorce:
 - adultery on either side
 - failure of the woman to produce an heir
 - husband's dislike for his wife
 - husband's wish to marry another woman
- wife = entitled to some support from her husband (no matter what circumstances of the divorce)
- once divorced, both partners were free to remarry



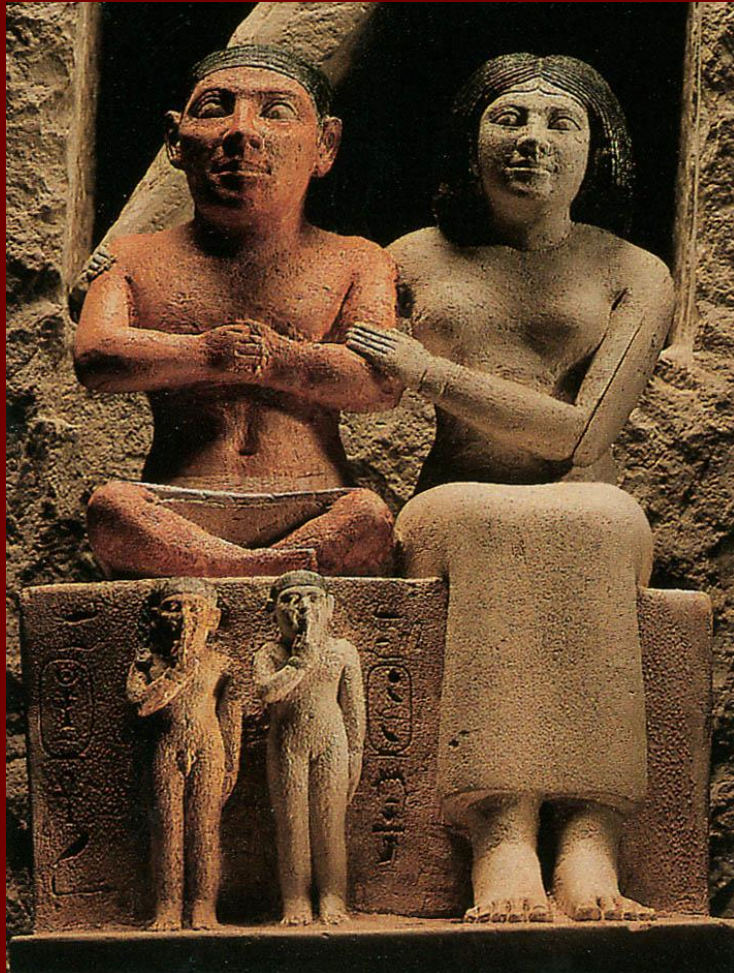
Instruction of Any

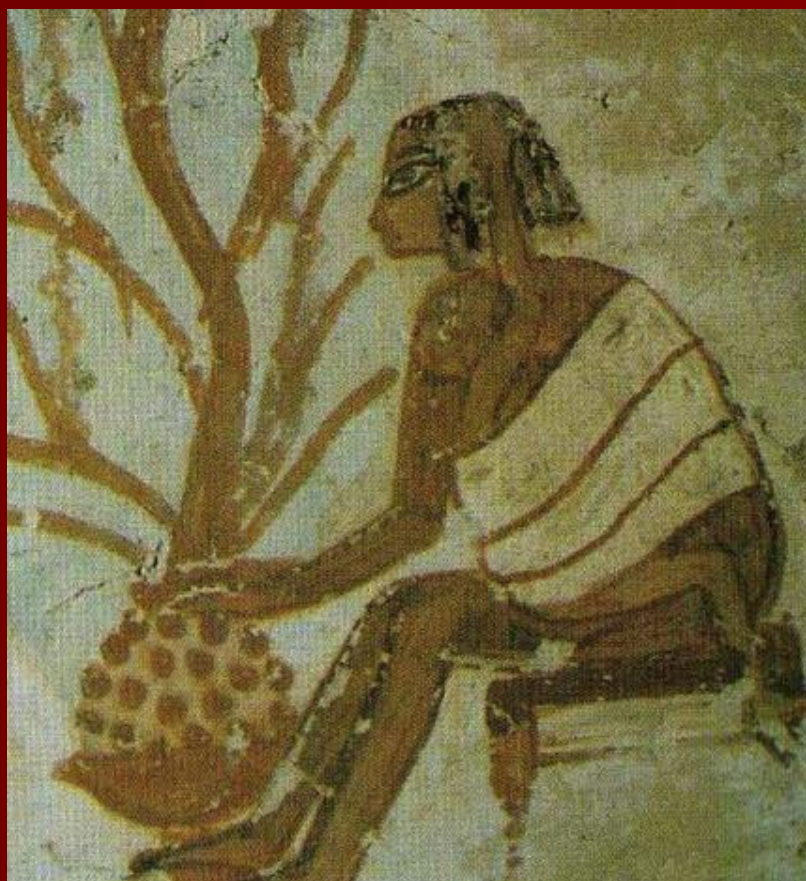
*'Beware of a woman who is a stranger,
One not known in her town;
Don't stare at her when she goes by,
Do not know her carnally.
A deep water whose course is unknown,
Such is a woman away from her husband.
"I am pretty," she tells you daily,
When she has no witnesses;
She is ready to ensnare you,
A great deadly crime when it is heard.*

Multiple marriages

- ❑ More than one partner at a time or at a lifetime
- ❑ seemed to happen often (high risk in childbirth to die → new wife) → term “former wife” as dead, shown on monuments (divorced women not shown)
- ❑ Polygamy maybe in elite, but difficult to differentiate between consecutive and concurrent marriage
- ❑ Interesting: no evidence for the idea of illegitimate children

Children







The Gendered Past – Queenship, Gender and Politics

Mothers, Wives, Daughters and
the King in Ancient Egypt

Queens in Ancient Egypt – until NK

- ❑ No independent word for QUEEN, but connected / in proportion to the KING: hemet – nesw – “wife of the king”, mother of the king, daughter of the king
 - position and importance due to her physical relationship to the king.
- ❑ Position not equal or parallel to that of king: his office = divine as incarnation of HORUS on earth, who inherited the throne from his father, OSIRIS → but some queens were raised to be king
- ❑ Queen could consort with divinity but was not considered divine → therefore no own mythological backing, nor a divine role to fill

Women in connection with the king

- Queens: mother, (principal) wife, (first-born) daughter
→ (well) attested
- Secondary wives (never higher than king's wife),
concubines → the role of the Harem → less good
attested
- The role of queens:
 - Religion
 - exercise of power
 - divinity (divine attributes and ideal beauty)
 - the female counterpart of the pharaoh → complementing
the divine role
 - the female king

Queens: mother



- The Queen Mother
- Ankhenesmeryre II and Pepy II Neferkara
- OK, 6th dyn.
- New York, Brooklyn Museum of Art 39.119

mwt-nesw (king's mother)

- ❑ Was medium by which royal power transferred from father to son
- ❑ always also title “daughter of the god,” as reference to her father, the deceased king – passing divine birthright onto her son, legitimisation of his right to rule

Queens: wife



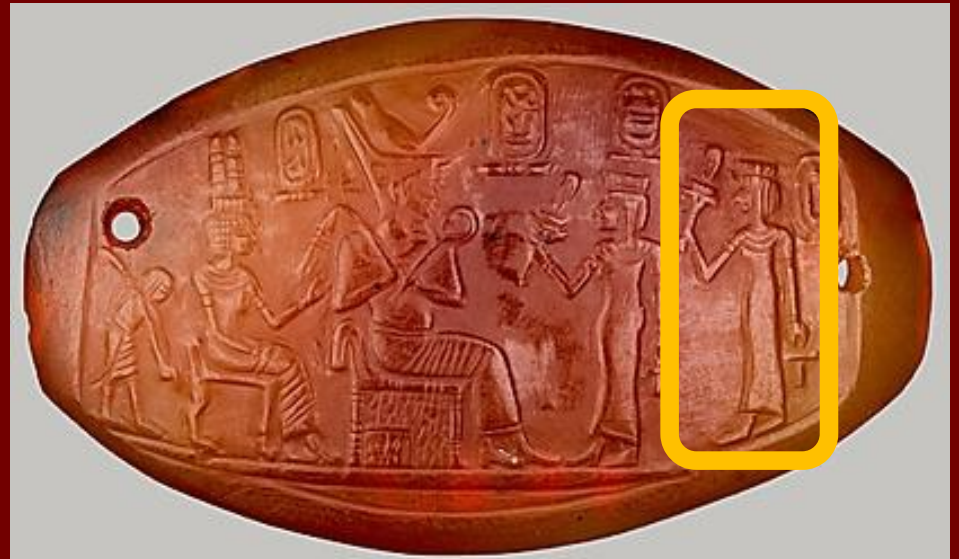
- The Great Royal Wife
- Nefertari, Ramses II, 19th dyn.
- Abu Simbel, small temple (temple of Ibshek), Hypostyle Hall
- New: queen is present at scene of smiting of the enemies

Queens: daughter



- Carved Plaque of Amenhotep III (MMA 44.2.1)
- Princesses Henuttaneb and Isis in front of their parents, playing sistrum
- AIII celebrating jubilee together with Tiye

Queens: daughter AND wife



Insignia of queens – signs of power

- ❑ Msw nswt (OK) depicted wearing the **vulture headdress**
 - = attribute of goddesses in the Old Kingdom
 - Vulture headdress maybe chosen as ancient Egyptian word for both “mother” and “vulture” = mwt
- ❑ MK: queen / princess wear **uraeus**: connection to kingship
- ❑ Middle Kingdom royal women could also wear **double plume**
- ❑ sun disk and horns = symbols of Hathor, as well as double plume (Hathor wore when appeared as a cow) – Hathor = daughter of Re, therefore could be depicted as wife of Horus
- ❑ Queen TIYE (wife of Amenhotep III) deified as Hathor in Sedeinga in Upper Nubia; Queen NEFERTARI (wife of Rameses II) also deified as Hathor in the small temple at ABU SIMBEL



Power Queens - Hatshepsut

- Became antique role model for modern feminists for being a queen-pharaoh
 - daughter of T1, wife of T2 (half brother)
 - Took on role of King
 - erection of obelisks
 - depiction directly with gods
 - chosen by king as successor
 - divine birth
 - 5-fold titulary
 - male regalia
 - co-regency
 - Passed god's wife role to her daughter Neferura

Hatshepsut
and Amun

male rep.

'daughter of
Amun'





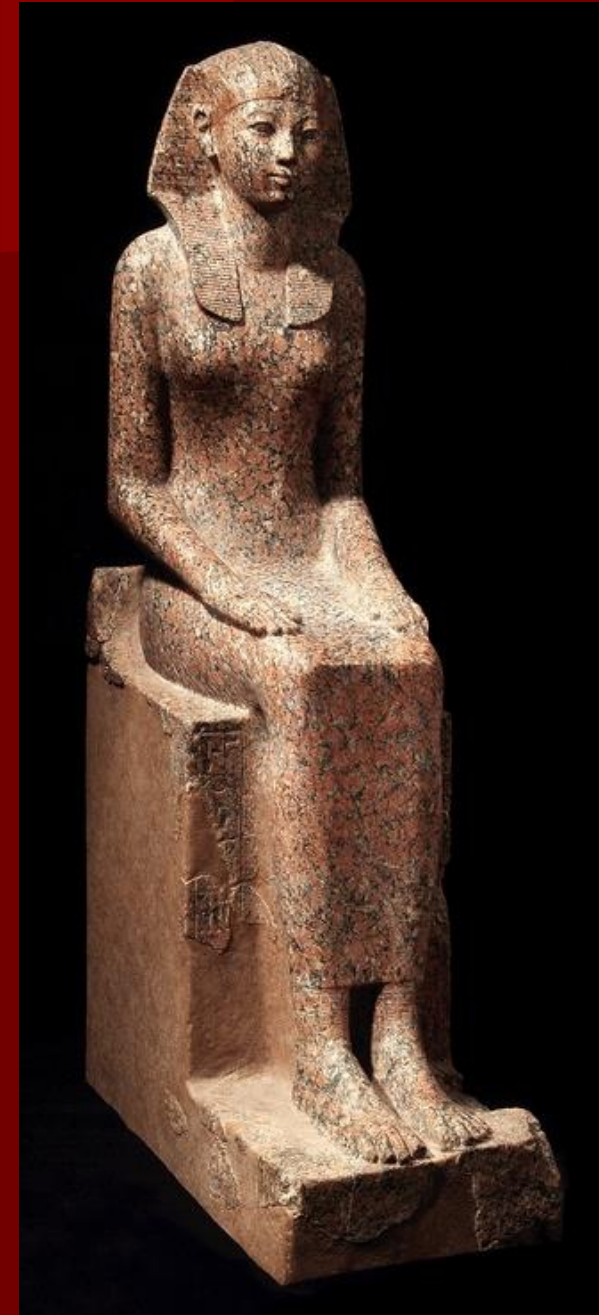
**HATSHEPSUT IN MALE AND FEMALE GARB
FROM STATUARY ERECTED AT
DEIR EL-BAHARI**



Hatchepsut

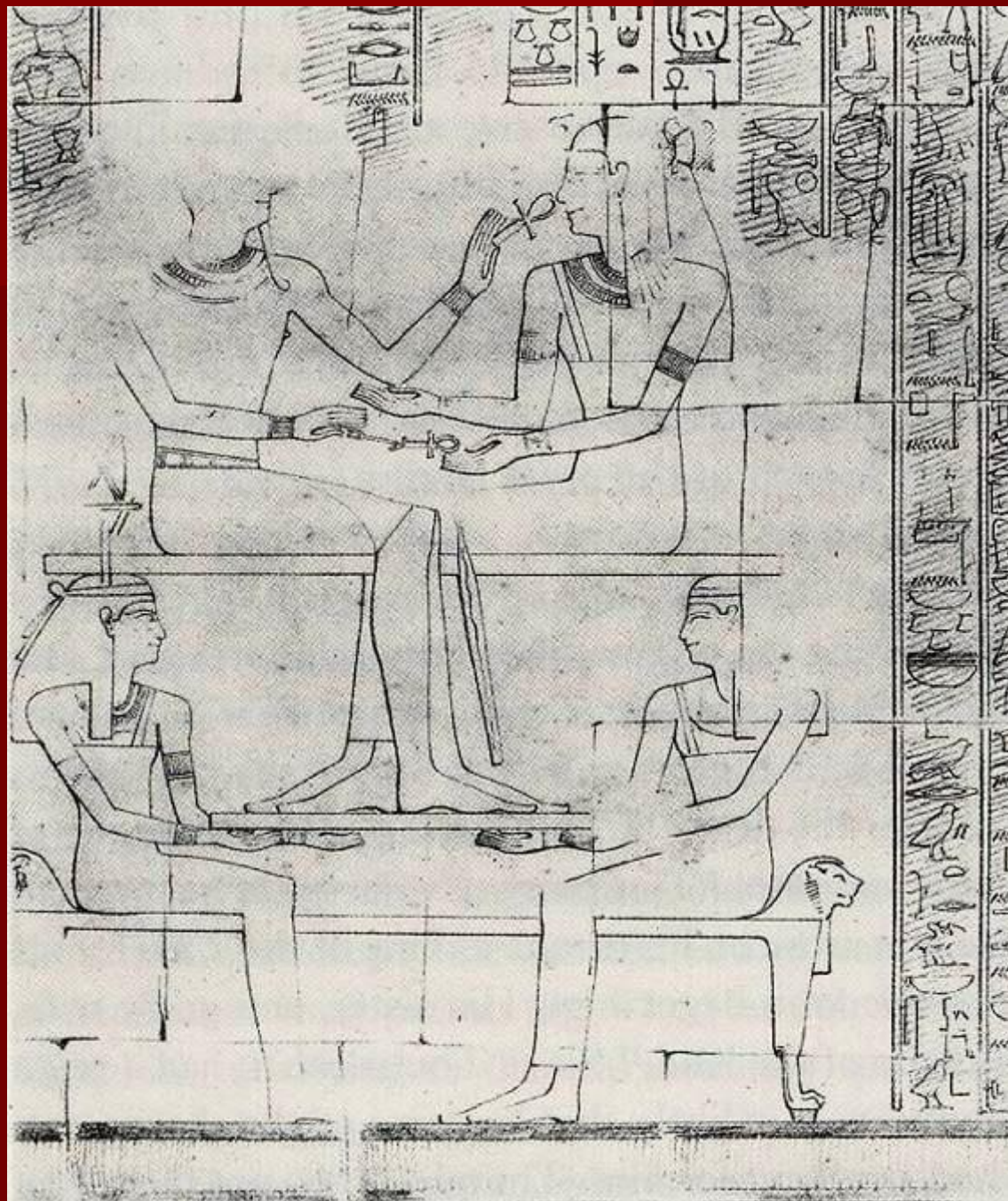
**MMA 29.3.3 , Torso lent by Rijksmuseum
van Oudheden, Leiden (L.1998.80)**

- mainly peaceful, but military campaigns in Nubia, the Levant, and Syria early in her career
- established the trade networks (disrupted during the Hyksos time), thereby building the wealth of 18th dyn.:
 - mission to the Land of Punt (year 19): 5 ships, 70 feet (21 m) long each, accommodating 210 men (sailors and 30 rowers).
 - Brought thirty-one live frankincense trees, the roots of which were carefully kept in baskets for the duration of the voyage; first recorded attempt to transplant foreign trees; planted in the courts of her Deir el Bahri mortuary temple complex.
 - returned with living Puntites (people of Punt). This trading expedition to Punt was roughly during Hatshepsut's nineteenth year of reign.



Amun 'visits'
Hatshepsut's
mother Ahmose

(Divine birth
of Hatshepsut)



Power Queens????!!!

- Tiye
 - principal wife
 - non-royal birth, yet kingly attributes
 - equal scale
 - diplomatic correspondance
 - shown as sphinx & sitting over sema-tawy
 - pharaonic titulary
 - divine equations:
 - Hathor, Maat, Taweret
 - death
 - 1st buried in East Amarna, reburied in KV55, reburied by priests during R9



Amarna Letter 26

Say to Teye [= *Tiye*], mistress of Egypt: Thus, Tušratta, the king of Mittani [. . .] You are one that knows that I myself always showed love to Mimmureya [= *Nebmaatre*], your husband [. . .] And now you are the one that must not forget your love for Mimmureya, your brother. Increase it for Napkhurreya [= *Neferkheperure*] and maintain it for him.

Deification of Tiye

- Worshipped as the sun and Lord of Nubia at Soleb
- Tiye worshipped as the sun god's consort, Hathor, at Sedeinga

